

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL
OF WELLS

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE YEAR ENDED

31 DECEMBER, 1949

WELLS :
CLARE, SON & CO., LTD.
9, HIGH STREET

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HEALTH FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1949.

WELLS, SOMERSET.
JUNE 20th, 1950.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report for the year ended December 31st, 1949.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area, 57,175 Acres.

Population as supplied by the Registrar General, 10,020.

Number of inhabited houses on the Rate Books, 2,812.

Rateable Value: £43,306.

Sum represented by a Penny Rate: £159 (at March, 1949).

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

GEOLOGY—Dolomitic Conglomerate at Chewton Mendip and Westbury-sub-Mendip ; Mountain Limestone at Priddy ; Red Marl at Dinder, North Wootton and Rodney Stoke ; Red Marl and River Gravel at Wookey ; Lower Lias at West Pennard, Baltonsborough and Walton ; Alluvium and Peat at Glastonbury Moor, Meare and Godney.

OCCUPATION—Chiefly Agricultural ; Cheese and Cider Making ; Dairy Farming ; Paper Factories at Wookey and Wookey Hole ; Stone Quarrying in various parts of the District. Some of the people at Butleigh and Walton work at Shoe, Leather and Skin Factories at Street and Glastonbury. At Wookey Hole there is a factory manufacturing Electric Components, Fractional Motors and Television Equipment.

EXTRACTS FROM THE VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR.

(Rates for England and Wales shown in brackets)

BIRTHS :

	Total	M.	F.	
Legitimate	189	100	89	
Illegitimate	10	6	4	
	199	106	93	Birth Rate 19.86 (16.7)

STILL BIRTHS: Total 4, Legitimate 4, Illegitimate Nil.

DEATHS: Total 119, Male 58, Female 61, Death Rate 11.88 (11.7).

Number of Women dying in or in consequence of Childbirth :
Nil.

Deaths of Infants under one year of age: Total 4, Legitimate 4,
Illegitimate Nil.

Death Rate of Infants: All Infants per 1,000 live births, 20.10 (32.00).

Premature birth and debility accounted for, Nil ; Bronchitis, 2.

Deaths from Cancer (all ages), 16.

Deaths from Measles (all ages), Nil.

Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages), Nil.

Deaths from Diarrhoea (under 2 years), Nil.

Deaths from Pneumonia (all ages), 3.

Deaths from Cerebro-Spinal Fever (all ages), Nil.

Deaths from Diphtheria (all ages), Nil.

Deaths from Influenza (all ages), 2.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR.

Disease	Total Cases Notified	Admitted to Hospital	Deaths
Scarlet Fever	2	Nil.	Nil.
Diphtheria	—	—	—
Measles	137	Nil.	Nil.
Puereral pyrexia	2	—	Nil.
Cerebro-spinal-meningitis ...	Nil.	—	Nil.
Pneumonia	3	Nil.	3
Whooping Cough	3	Nil.	Nil.
Erysipelas	2	—	—
Enteric Fever	Nil.	—	Nil.
Dysentery	Nil.	—	Nil.
Ophthalmia Neonatorum ...	Nil.	—	Nil.
Acute Poliomyelitis	2	2	Nil.

TUBERCULOSIS.

New Cases and Mortality during the year.

Age Periods.	NEW CASES				DEATHS			
	Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0—5	1							
10—15			1					
15—20		1						
20—25		1						
30—35	1							
35—40		1			1	1		
55—60	1							
65—70						1		

Public Officers of the District :

Medical Officer of Health (part time) : Dr. T. R. G. Melrose, F.R.C.S. (Ed.).

Sanitary Inspector (whole time) : Stanley Merton Payne, Cert., S.I.B., M.S.I.A., Diploma of the Institute of Hygiene; R.S.I. Certificate as Inspector of Meat and other Foods ; R.S.I. Certificate in Sanitary Science as applied to Buildings and Public Works.

Additional Sanitary Inspector (whole time) : S. Harkness, Cert., S.I.B., M.S.I.A., Certificate as Inspector of Meat and Other Foods.

Water Engineer and Surveyor (whole time): Ivor Roberts Morgan, B.Sc. (Hons.), A.M.I.Mun.E., A.M.I.C.E.

CAUSES OF SICKNESS. There were no special causes of sickness.

PROFESSIONAL NURSING. District Nurses under Local Associations and Health Visitors, appointed by the County Council ; the latter keep us informed as to the existence and removal of Tuberculosis Cases and other matters affecting the health of the district.

CLINICS. There is an Infant Welfare Centre in Wells, which is used by people residing in the Rural Area. School and Tuberculosis Clinics are provided by the County Council.

MIDWIVES. The lists are kept by the County Medical Officer of Health to whom they report all births, and any abnormal circumstances which might arise therefrom.

HOSPITALS. *Tuberculosis* : These are provided by the County Council. *Smallpox* : This is also provided by the County Council. *Maternity and Children* : Wells Cottage Hospital.

SCARLET FEVER, DIPHTHERIA, Etc. Any infectious cases are now moved to the Ham Green Hospital, at Bristol.

No institution for un-married mothers, illegitimate children and homeless children exists in the District.

Removals of infectious cases to Hospital are now arranged from the Ham Green Hospital, in Bristol, on notification from the attending Doctor or the Public Health Department.

Attendance is made weekly by the County Tuberculosis Officer at Glastonbury and a considerable number of patients from the Rural Area attend here. The homes of notified cases are visited by the Sanitary Inspector and myself as well as by the County Health Visitors.

In the cases of Diphtheria and Cerebro-Spinal-Meningitis use is made of the County Bacteriological Laboratory, and Anti-Toxin is supplied by the District Council, when applied for by the Medical men practising in the District.

DISINFECTION. After infectious disease this is carried out by the Sanitary Inspector with the use of spraying apparatus on the lines recommended by the County Medical Officer of Health. All disinfectants are supplied free by the Council.

LABORATORY WORK. The County Council have a laboratory at Taunton where samples are examined both bacteriologically and chemically and also for tubercule bacilli. In addition the Public Health Laboratory Service have a laboratory at Taunton dealing with water samples, ice cream, etc.

ERADICATION OF BED BUGS. There have been no complaints and inspections during the year have revealed no bed bugs.

VENEREAL DISEASE. From the available evidence it would appear that the area is remarkably free from this disease. There has however, been one death from syphilitic disease during the year.

SEWERAGE.

No works have been carried out during the year, but the Council have a scheme in outline, and the County Council have agreed to accord priority to the following Parishes : Draycott, Rodney Stoke, Westbury, Easton, Walton and Baltonsborough. A full time Engineer together with the necessary staff has been appointed to prepare the schemes in detail.

WATER SUPPLY.

The district is in urgent need of a good water supply. Development at present is very costly and slow owing to lack of water in most areas.

Some parishes have supplies, but these generally are either deficient in quantity or quality, sometimes both. The main Regional Scheme has been held up, mainly due to the lack of sufficient quantity of water from any one single source—a feature strongly desired by the Ministry of Health. Estimated water requirements show a tendency to rise and the longer any scheme is held up the more difficult it becomes to put into operation. The present policy of the Council is to use the Priddy source as a supply for the Northern Parishes of the district. The water is sufficient for this purpose. Mains will be put in large enough to allow for extensions in the area of supply as and when other water becomes available. This may be from the Axbridge Reservoir, or various sources at Rodney Stoke.

BALTONSBOROUGH.

Each inhabited house has a water supply laid on. The water is supplied in bulk from Shepton Mallet R.D.C. A reservoir of 25,000 gallons capacity is situate on Windmill Hill. Top water level O.D. + 190. The delivery of water in the summer months is very restricted and quite insufficient for the needs. Water is also brought to this village by a link main from West Pennard—this meets most of the deficiencies in the lower-lying parts of the village but during peak draw-off periods, pressure is bad—this is due to the low head (159 O.D.) and long length of link main.

It is proposed next year to extract water from the River Brue. This will be chlorinated and pumped up to the reservoir.

BUTLEIGH.

About 42 of the 177 houses have a water supply laid on from the Estate Supply. About 30 rely on standpipes and the remainder on private wells. The Estate Supply is derived from surface springs and storage of 500,000 gallons or more is provided in a series of reservoirs. The quality of the water is usually good, but there have in the past been various occasions on which pollution has occurred. Sampling of individual springs was carried out some few years ago and the water from the bad springs was cut off. The supply as it exists is far from sufficient for the needs, and during dry periods great conservation has to be practised.

CHEWTON MENDIP.

Approximately 91 out of 174 properties are supplied from the Estate Supply or from Shepton Mallet. Of the remainder 44 have supplies available within 100 yards. The other properties are generally outlying and have to rely on wells or rainwater tanks. The Estate Supply is derived from surface springs and a borehole. The water pressure at certain points, such as Nedge Hill and West End is inadequate and during periods of economy these places are the first to suffer. Reservoir capacity is only on a very small scale and the supply generally appears to require further development.

OUT ST. CUTHBERT.

East and West Horrington.

A spring supply piped to a 10,000 gallon reservoir at 656 O.D. provides water for these two villages. The water is of good quality and all needs have been met up to the present. Some 59 out of 116 houses have a piped supply and the remainder have standpipes available within reasonable distance.

Coxley.

There are some 198 houses, rather scattered in this village. A few have private water supplies laid on. Some have their own wells, but a very large number have to haul water from a spring known as "Little Well." The 28 new Council Houses have a good supply under pressure. Permission has been obtained to lay water mains in the village early in the new year.

Burcott.

71 houses either without water or relying on their own wells.

Easton.

73 houses. Some have private piped supplies. There are two public wells which provide good water for the bulk of the population. Most of the private wells are polluted and out of use.

Wookey Hole, Elm Close and Haybridge.

These groups of houses are supplied by Wells City who are the Statutory Water Undertakers. Most houses have piped supplies of good quality water in adequate supply.

Dulcote.

Some 43 houses of which 30 have a piped supply derived from a small private water system installed many years ago. There are no complaints of shortage and the cottages without piped supplies have water available within easy reach.

Chilcote, Worminster, Milton and Walcombe.

These small groups of houses have piped supplies from various sources. Their needs appear to have been met, and they do not form part of the Regional Scheme.

DINDER.

35 out of 57 houses have piped supplies from the Estate Supply. This water is derived from springs which rise near Masbury Ring. The remainder of the houses are not within reach of the mains and have to rely on wells, etc., for their water. The Estate Water is of good quality and appears to be sufficient for present requirements.

GODNEY.

47 out of 73 houses have piped supplies from the Street U.D.C. main which runs through the village. The supply is of good quality and there is no shortage at any time. The remainder of the houses have to rely on private supply as they are not in compact groups or within easy reach of the trunk main.

MEARE.

There are 269 houses in this parish and only in three or four instances are there good supplies of water from private boreholes. The remainder for the greater part are dependent on shallow wells usually polluted, or water from the river or water hauled from a spring situate some two or three miles from the centre of the village. Serious shortages were experienced during the summer.

NORTH WOOTTON.

64 out of 78 houses have piped water of good quality and unlimited quantity. The remainder of the houses are not within easy reach of the mains but in at least three of these cases they are likely to lay on water at an early date. The water is derived from two boreholes, each fitted with an electric pump. There is a reservoir of 30,000 gallons capacity at 155 O.D. One electric pump is controlled by float switch and provides water for the Parish—the other pump is manually controlled and delivers water into the chlorinating plant of the Glastonbury Corporation which is within 100 yards of our plant. The water so delivered is taken back by this Council at West Pennard for use in that Parish.

PRIDDY.

37 out of 86 houses now have a piped supply from an agricultural system installed by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, also a number of farmhouses. The District Council are purchasing

water in bulk at some of the remote parts of the village, and are distributing to the nearby cottages. The water is of good quality.

A very large part of the population still have to haul water from the Council's supply at Priddy Green. This water also is of excellent quality and of such sufficiency that it forms the major source of the Council's Regional Water Supply Scheme. Some further development has been done in this area during the year with the object of finding sufficient additional water to meet the requirements of the Regional Scheme.

RODNEY STOKE.

41 out of 230 houses in this Parish have piped water from the Street U.D.C. Main. Street Council under their Water Act have to supply as much of this Parish as can be supplied by gravity. The remainder of the Parish have to depend on private wells, a spring at Rodney Stoke or a Public Pump at Draycott. The position generally is far from satisfactory. A main has been laid from the Axbridge supply along Westfield Lane to the new housing site, and several houses supplied en route. Permission has been obtained to lay a water main in Draycott early in the new year.

SHARPHAM.

9 houses out of 25 have piped supplies. The remainder are not within easy reach of the main and have to haul water from one of two standpipes which have been provided. The source of the water is the Street U.D.C. main. Wells R.D.C. purchase in bulk. Quality and quantity satisfactory.

WALTON.

There are 143 houses, 100 of which have piped supplies. The new water main was laid during the year and applications for supplies are coming in satisfactorily.

WESTBURY

39 out of 169 houses have piped supplies—these are of a private nature and mainly from an agricultural scheme installed by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners some years ago. The remainder of the houses rely on private wells or the three public wells.

WEST PENNARD.

175 out of 194 houses have piped supplies. The remainder have either a standpipe within easy reach or have private supplies. There is a 30,000 gallon reservoir at Sticklynch, and water is purchased in bulk from the Glastonbury Corporation. When shortages were encountered it became necessary to provide Glastonbury Corporation with water at North Wootton (see note above) and during the dry season it is now possible to pump into the main at North Wootton as much water as is required to be extracted at West Pennard. The arrangement is very satisfactory to both Councils.

WOOKEY.

202 houses, none of which have piped supplies. The villagers rely on their own wells, many of which are polluted. The position is far from satisfactory. A supply has been laid to the new housing site and permission has been obtained to commence the village interim scheme early in the new year.

THE MENDIP HOSPITAL.

This large County Institution which houses well over 1,000 persons has its own water supply. The main source is two boreholes situate between Bristol Road and Watchet's Spring which provides the water for East and West Horrington. These boreholes are in the old red sandstone formation, and yield sufficient water for the very large demands of such an institution and the farms run in connection therewith. At the present time it is felt that the supply is approaching a point where, due to increased demands, it may be insufficient, and it may be that the Council will be approached with a view to supplementing the supply during times of need.

SANITARY INSPECTOR'S REPORT.

The following is a summary of the inspections made during the year :—

Infectious dwellings : Occupiers served with notice as to isolation of patients and disinfection	6
Disinfectants supplied by the Council	21
Dwellings and clothing disinfected as directed by the Medical Officer of Health	6
Nuisances arising from foul and choked drains, foul accumulations, etc.	62
Samples of drinking water sent to the County Laboratory for analysis	49
Premises licensed under the Petroleum Acts for the storage of petrol	36
Premises licensed under the Petroleum Acts for the storage of carbide of calcium	1
Visits re water supplies	108
Bakehouses (6), Slaughterhouses (12), inspected ...	18
Public Schools inspected	12
Visits to dairies and cowsheds	385
Visits re food inspection	80
Other inspections under Housing Acts	208
Visits re rats	20
Visits re sewage disposal schemes	31
Visits re refuse collection	29
Inspections of Ice Cream premises	15

REFUSE COLLECTION.

Unburnable household refuse is collected monthly. Collection of salvage has been discontinued owing to inability to dispose of waste paper which has been the main item of salvage.

FACTORIES ACT, 1937.

1.—INSPECTIONS for purpose of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors).

Premises (1)	Number on Register (2)	Number of		
		Inspections (3)	Written notices (4)	Occupiers prosecuted (5)
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	41	67	Nil	Nil
(ii) Factories not included in (i) to which Section 7 applies (a) Subject to the Local Authorities (Transfer of Enforcement) Order, 1938†				
(b) Others	23	38	Nil	Nil
(iii) Other Premises under the Act‡ (excluding out-workers' premises)				
TOTAL	64	105	Nil	Nil

DEFECTS (i.e. want of Cleanliness) were found in 6 cases. These were remedied on informal action.

OUTWORKERS. There are 74 outworkers in the district (all glovemakers).

ICE CREAM

No premises are licensed for the manufacture of ice cream, but 9 shops are registered for the sale of this product.

SLAUGHTERHOUSES.

Under the Livestock (Restriction on Slaughtering) Order 1940, all the slaughterhouses in the Rural area became automatically closed on January 12th, 1940. With the exception of farmers' pigs (for their own consumption) and a few casualties no slaughtering has taken place at any of the slaughterhouses. Regular inspection has therefore to a great extent been unnecessary. Only a small quantity of meat has been condemned during the year.

FOOD INSPECTION.

Inspection of food at shops and stores is carried out regularly and small quantities have been condemned as found necessary.

MILK AND DAIRIES ORDERS.

On October 1st, the control of milk producing premises (with the exception of water supplies and drainage) passed to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Local control generally speaking now only applies to the Retailing of Milk—other than Producer-Retailers.

The number of Purveyors of Milk (other than Producer-Retailers) is 13.

There are 3 Bottling licences for T.T. milk and 3 licences to retail T.T. or Accredited Milk.

HOUSING.

There were 268 applicants for Council Houses remaining on the lists at December 31st.

4 condemned houses were still occupied under licence at the end of the year.

An estimate of 220 houses still necessary was made as follows: To replace unfit houses, 150 ; to abate overcrowding, 10 ; Other unfit conditions, 60.

During the year 62 new houses have been completed by the Council and 11 by private enterprise. A further 31 were under construction, 24 by the Council and 7 by private enterprise.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

T. R. G. MELROSE,

Medical Officer of Health.

